

small size of the medicine bottle coupled with the combination of steps required to open the childproof container can prohibit many elderly, vision impaired, or even arthritic patients from receiving their proper dosages without assistance. To accommodate those patients that have difficulty or are unable to open such devices, pharmacies often issue medication in easy to open non-childproof containers. Although these containers are less difficult for the patient to open, they are also easier for others to open so extra precautions must be taken to keep them out of the hands of small children.

Another issue to the elderly and vision impaired of great concern is the issue of medicine container labeling. In the case of a medicine or pill bottle, typically a label is affixed to the outer, cylindrical portion of the bottle to thoroughly describe the contents, dosage, and any special precautions for the content's use. This label usually includes pertinent information such as the name of the medicine, the prescribing doctor's name and phone number, the dispensing pharmacy's phone number, the prescribed dosage amount and interval, and special restrictions. For example, U.S. Patent No. 5,752,723 is directed to a pharmacy label containing such information, hereby incorporated herein by reference. Special restrictions that may be included upon the label may include suggestions to take the medication with food, or a warning not to operate heavy machinery because of drowsiness the medicine may induce.

Unfortunately, the label is often too small or too cryptic for elderly or vision impaired patients to comprehend properly. Text located on the label is often small and usually includes medical terms or scientific names of medication that the average patient does not easily understand. The matter of simply enlarging the text of the label is not always a possible solution, as space on the medicine bottle is finite. One solution to this problem has been to magnify the

labels using an external source, such as described in U.S. Patent No. 5,193,032, hereby incorporated herein by reference.

Because a majority of the information on the label is required by law, it is unlikely that any of the information may be removed to allow for the enlargement of any remaining text or labels. Elderly and vision impaired patients need a system and method of identifying their medications accurately, easily, and quickly. A system capable of accomplishing these tasks in an improved amount of time and with a high degree of certainty is desirable.

In addition to labels disposed on the outer portion of the medicine source, containers, paper labels are usually attached to the bag containing the prescriptions. These labels inform the patient what the prescribed medicine is, what it is for, and what possible side effects may occur. Within days, if not minutes, however, these labels get separated from the medicine containers. At that point, the patient must rely on the small label disposed on the container or must rely on his or her memory to know what medicine is in the container. If someone has a lot of health problems and has to take a lot of medicines, it is very difficult to remember which medications are for the different ailments.

To add to the confusion, these medications have long technical names that are hard to read – much less pronounce. There are so many medicines that a lot of them sound alike. For example, brand names can be Atarax for itching, Ambien for sleep, or Prilosec for stomach problems. The generics for these medications sound complicated. For example, hydroxyzine for itching, promethazine for nausea, cimetidine for the stomach, phenazopyridine for the bladder, and chlorthalidone for the colon. The list is overwhelming for these technical medicines. If one has poor eye sight, cannot read, or is not good at remembering, it makes taking medication difficult and dangerous. There is a chance of taking the wrong medication.